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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/20/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [HU](#)

SUBJECT: RHETORICAL QUESTIONS: ORBAN'S STATE OF THE NATION

REF: A) BUDAPEST 226 B) BUDAPEST 199 C) BUDAPEST 135

AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: POL/C ERIC V. GAUDIOSI

¶1. (C) FIDESZ Party President Viktor Orban gave a fiery "State of the Nation" address to an invited group of several hundred party representatives in Budapest February 16 (ref a).

NEW MAJORITY VS. NEW ARISTOCRACY

¶2. (C) The speech represented a clear escalation in the opposition's rhetoric. Orban strongly denounced the Gyurcsany government as "Hungary's new aristocracy," demanding accountability for their "lies, cynicism, and pretense." He asserted that the people have the right to remove their government, warning that there will be "no peace without justice" and stating that only the "new majority" led by FIDESZ can restore Hungary's strength.

¶3. (SBU) Orban's remarks met with largely critical reviews. Many commentators saw nothing new in his address, describing the event as a "missed opportunity" to lay out clear policy alternatives in response to PM Gyurcsany's speech to Parliament February 13 (ref b). Noting the intensity of the rhetoric, Orban's former cabinet chief (and more recent critic), Istvan Stumpf, remarked that "what Orban calls a crisis will never be big enough to force the cabinet's resignation." Minister of Economy Koka has already warned that Orban is courting "civil war."

¶4. (C) Our colleagues in the diplomatic community believe the opposition will "change the volume but not the debate" as the government proceeds with its reform agenda in the months ahead. They see Orban as fixated on divisive "dissident tactics" while a new breed of FIDESZ leaders - composed of elected officials more attuned to compromise than confrontation - grows increasingly impatient on the sidelines. In a recent interview, Budapest District V Mayor (and former FIDESZ national campaign chairman) Antal Rogan commented that the party "no longer resembles Orban" and suggested that "everything must change." Our colleagues believe this internal pressure may push an insecure Orban to more extreme rhetoric (and potentially more extreme action) in order to achieve success now whatever the objective risks.

COLORLESS REVOLUTION

¶5. (C) Comment: After a new (and welcome) focus on issues such as energy security over the winter (ref c), Orban is apparently returning to the familiar politics of outrage. As our diplomatic colleagues note, his populist remarks are still those of an angry young man ... albeit one who is no longer quite so young. Indeed, there is a part of Orban that

seems to yearn for the barricades, as if he regrets the fact that Hungary had a colorless transition in 1989-90 rather than a color-coded revolution. While this attitude strikes a deep chord with many Hungarians, it contrasts sharply with the more pragmatic approach of others in the party who would prefer to appeal to voters' self-interest rather than their self-image. As March 15 approaches, Orban will be tempted to continue his more extreme rhetoric, both to destabilize the government and to solidify his own political position. End Comment.

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